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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KIRF](#) [ASEC](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: JOS REMAINS CALM AS LOCAL GOVERNMENT
CHAIRMEN SWORN IN; INVESTIGATIONS UNDERWAY OVER VIOLENCE

REF: A. 08 ABUJA 2377
[1](#)B. 08 ABUJA 2328 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b
& d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On January 21, Plateau State Governor Jonah Jang swore in the controversial 17 Local Government Area (LGA) chairmen whose November 27, 2008 elections were marred by alleged rigging that sparked a surge of violence in Jos resulting in over 300 deaths (ref B). Despite concerns from some quarters of renewed violence, the swearing-in occurred without incident as the city continues to operate under military rule with a strictly enforced curfew from 7pm to 6am. The atmosphere in Jos remains tense as many still fear renewed violence once the military departs. Five separate panels of inquiry have been established to investigate the Jos violence. President Yar'Adua, the House of Representatives, the Senate, Plateau State Governor Jonah Jang, and the Plateau State House of Assembly have all announced the creation of separate panels. In what appears to be a power struggle between federal and state governments, Jang filed a motion with the Supreme Court asking for an injunction against President Yar'Adua's panel on grounds that the federal government does not have the authority to investigate state matters. Jang also demanded that the National Assembly panels cease and desist on the same grounds. Suspicions about the motives behind these separate investigations have created a stand-off on all sides. Nigeria has a track record of ignoring the results of previous panels of inquiry into outbreaks of sectarian violence in Plateau state (including in 2004, 2001, 1997 and 1994); given that these five panels may very well reach five different conclusions, there is every possibility that this will happen again. END SUMMARY.

LGA CHAIRMEN SWORN IN; FEARS OF VIOLENCE REMAIN

[1](#)2. (C) According to Embassy contacts and local staff, the atmosphere in Jos remains tense and the city remains under martial law with a strictly enforced curfew. Many believe additional violence is inevitable because the root problems of indigene versus settler tension and a flawed electoral process have not been addressed. On January 21, Governor Jang swore in the 17 Local Government Chairmen whose election sparked the original outbreak of violence. Despite fears that the swearing in would spark renewed violence, as of

early January 26 no disturbances were reported. Area residents, however, remain concerned that when the military moves out, acts of retribution will begin, sparking violence which could easily spread to other areas of the country.

YAR'ADUA PANEL

¶3. (U) On December 25, 2008, President Yar'Adua established an eight-person Administrative Panel of Inquiry and appointed retired Major-General Emmanuel Abisoye, a Christian Yoruba from Kwara State, as the Chairman. Other members of the panel include: Festus Okoye, a human rights lawyer; Ambassador Godfrey B. Preware, former Director-General of the National Intelligence Agency from 1998-1999; Ambassador Fatai Sa'ad Abubakar; and Musa Shafi'l, a Director in the Presidency who was selected Secretary of the Committee. The Nigeria Police Force, State Security Services, and Nigerian Armed Forces were also asked to submit one nominee each to participate in the panel. In response to the federal government's action, Plateau State Governor Jang immediately filed suit with the Supreme Court, contending that the President did not have the authority to investigate state affairs. Jang also sought an injunction to force the panel to cease proceedings, but no ruling has been issued by the Supreme Court to date. A spokesman for President Yar'Adua stressed to the media that the panel was not a judicial panel of inquiry, which had the power to deliver punishment; but rather a fact-finding panel tasked with producing a report on the root cause of the problem and provide guidance on how to avert similar incidents in the future. Despite Yar'Adua's appointment of a Christian chairman to the panel, there were

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claims of bias from some Christians in the area. According to media reports, the Northern Christian Elders Forum (NOCEF) accused Yar'Adua of taking sides with the Muslims and shielding the perpetrators of the violence.

¶4. (C) Much of the criticism from Plateau residents is focused on panel Chairman Abisoye himself. In 1976, Abisoye headed the military tribunal into the Dimka uprising in which then Head of State Murtala Mohammed was murdered. Abisoye was responsible for the conviction, and in some cases execution, of numerous soldiers allegedly involved with the violent coup - a majority of whom were from Plateau State. Many in Plateau State still harbor resentment towards Abisoye, and are suspicious about his involvement in the panel.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PANEL

¶5. (U) On December 30, 2008, the House of Representatives constituted an eight-member Ad-Hoc Committee to investigate the Jos crisis. Isa Idris Umaru (People's Democratic Party (PDP), Kaduna) was selected as chairman. Other members include: Chile Igbahuwa (PDP - Benue), Adefolabi Adeole Morfdeen (Action Congress - Lagos), Darlington Okereke (PDP - Ebonyi), Abdule Ningi (PDP - Bauchi), Abolagba Johnson Aigbudu (PDP - Edo), Sani Saleh Minjibir (All Nigeria People's Party - Kano), and Abdullahi Garba Bagudo (PDP - Kebbi). On January 5, the House Committee began six days of public hearings in Jos where they heard testimony from the general public. On January 6, Plateau State Attorney General Edward Pwajok sent a letter to the House Committee arguing that the National Assembly did not have the authority to investigate a state matter, and calling on the House to cease its investigation immediately. The Committee responded with a letter of its own, noting that Sections 4, 88, and 89 of the 1999 Constitution gave the Assembly the power to establish committees and investigate anything it wants; the House Committee continued with its hearings. Some Christian groups accused the House Committee of bias because it was comprised of five Muslims and three Christians, which the groups maintained did not accurately represent the majority Christian population in Plateau State.

GOVERNOR JANG'S PANEL

16. (U) On December 30, shortly after filing his suit against the President, Governor Jang established a state-level judicial panel headed by Prince Bola Ajibola, a Muslim Yoruba from Ogun State. Ajibola was a former Attorney General under General Ibrahim Babangida and one-time Judge at the International Court of Justice at The Hague. Other members of Jang's panel include: Regina Abang, Daniel Gopet, A.T. Yaya, retired Assistant Commissioner of Police Napoleon Timkat, and M.T. Falle as Secretary for the Committee. According to media reports, many local youth groups refused to participate in the state-led investigation, suggesting lack of objectivity due to the state government's involvement in the violence. Some praised Jang's choice of a Muslim as chairman, while others were quick to point out that while Ajibola is Muslim, he is not Hausa/Fulani, which is the predominant ethnic group of Jos Muslims.

JANG AND YAR'ADUA FACE OFF

17. (C) As previously reported, during a December 4 meeting, Governor Jang informed Ambassador that he met with President Yar'Adua about the Jos crisis immediately preceding his arrival at Ambassador's residence (ref A). Jang maintained that he and President Yar'Adua agreed to establish a joint inquiry into the root causes of the violence. Some reports suggested President Yar'Adua initiated his own panel because he grew impatient waiting for Jang to begin the investigation, especially given the international attention the incident received. The governor was reportedly angered that high-level delegations the President sent to Jos never called on him, a sign of disrespect in a protocol-sensitive country. When Jang, according to media reports, read about the President's panel in the newspaper, he decided he would

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strike back by challenging the President before the Supreme Court, and by establishing his own investigative team.

18. (C) Public opinion on the face-off between Yar'Adua and Jang is split. Based on media reports, some believe Yar'Adua overstepped his authority by establishing a panel without state level coordination. Others argue that the federal government needed to step in because Jang was seen as complicit in causing the violence, given his decision to push ahead with the elections against advice (Ref B), leading to strong suspicion that the state-level panel would not be objective. Some suggest that the stand-off has now become a personal feud between Yar'Adua, a Fulani, and Jang, a member of the indigenous Berom tribe of Plateau State. Most agree, however, that neither panel is likely to produce an objective report.

19. (C) COMMENT: The establishment of these numerous inquiry panels seems more about a show of power, mutual suspicion, and self-protection than about finding a solution to the problems that started the violence. We are not optimistic that any of the panels will produce objective, substantive reports or that any action will be taken to address the heart of the problem: transparent access to political power despite religion, ethnicity, or party affiliation. Tensions remain high in Plateau; we will watch for signs of renewed violence.
END COMMENT.

110. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.
SANDERS